Story Emily Brown

Tara had just moved from her rural, beautiful, care free neighborhood with spread out houses that you didn’t need to lock. Tara longed for the sweet gentle and caring kids that lived in them. The move to Newark had been hard. It was a crime filled city with people walking on garbage not caring about the problems it could cause for animals and even themselves. This polluted city had enormous cement pipes with black ugly smog appearing out of them and moving into the once clean white puffy clouds that were now filling the baby blue sky with black. In their new home, they were advised to have heavy duty window locks and burglar systems which everyone in the neighborhood had.

In this new city they were living in her, her dad and her seven other siblings had a very hard time sleeping. The loud noises were like the Fourth of July every single night. The cars that rushed past their house 24/7 always felt as though they were driving right into the old unstable home.

Just thinking about how bad things were turning out to be made her think about her old carefree life with no responsibility and a mom who knew what to do before it was needed.

Soon after they were through unpacking Dad called a meeting, which the whole family had been having annually since the death of their mother. Once they heard dad call Tyler Tara’s oldest brother quickly herded up the little ones and grabbed the littlest baby, Samantha out of the pink floral play pen her mom had picked out months earlier.

“Come on kids. What’s taking so long?” Dad yelled across the city house.

“Shut up Dad you know it takes longer than two minutes to get four kids, especially with one on the floor having a temper tantrum because I pried her away from the TV to the stupid kitchen table for a stupid family meeting!” Tyler yelled while still rubbing little Sam’s back.

“What is your problem? Please just come here and stop acting like that!” Dad exclaimed while trying to not get loud and furious.

At that time Ty knew that if he answered her would blow up at his dad and he knew that it would be a bad example and cause harm to their relationship.

A few minutes later all eight were sitting at the kitchen table.

“Dad, Johnny touched me.” Six year old Karen thundered trying to get attention.

“Johnny, did you touch Karen?” Dad questioned impatiently.

“No! Karen hit me in the eye, I have proof, see.” Johnny answered as he rushed to show his dad the hurt eye.

“Karen come here please.” Dad said trying to get ice for the 8 year old ice.

“Coming.” Karen yelled.

“Say sorry to Johnny so I could start the meeting.” Dad demanded.

“Sorry, brother.” Karen exclaimed in an innocent voice.

“Fine.” Johnny said with one eye covered.

“Okay now that I handled that let’s start, I understand it has been hard, moving and not having your mom any longer, so as the parent I have made what I think is the best decision for you… children six to sixteen will be going to the public school and Ty you will be helping with Sammy throughout the day and the other children later in the night.”

A moment of silence passed, all 8 mouths including little Sam’s were dropped open in astonishment but quickly this ended when Sammy happily babbled. Tara then stormed out of the room quickly followed by Dad.

“Tara can’t we talk about this.” Dad begged through the door in which he laid his ear listening to his weeping daughter.

“No! You are ruining my life. Why are you doing this to me?” Tara bawled through the shut door leading to her room.

“Honey… Just let me in so I can talk to you.” Dad said in a comforting way.

The comforting way worked, Tara slowly opened the door and let Dad quickly slide through then she shut the door and dashed to her bed without looking at Dad. Surprisingly Tara was the first to speak.

“Dad I am sorry for the way I have been acting, it’s just that I have something on my mind.” Tara explained slowly looking up.

“What is it hon’ you know you can tell me.”

Suddenly Tara blurted out “I want to dance.”

Dad turned pale as a ghost not expecting this to come out of her mouth.

“Tara I really don’t think you can do that, I mean how are you going to make a living?” Dad said not expressing his real reason involved.

“Dad I could do it I’ll practice really hard and I will audition for things to make money for the family, please just let me do it.”

“Honey you know we don’t have any extra money for dance classes.” Dad said making even more excuses.

“But Dad, I will baby-sit and do chores and pay for it myself.” Tara pleaded while going to her piggy bank to see how much money she already had.

“Tara I’m the parent and I say no, that’s final.” Dad said firmly leaving the room.

Tara stopped him quickly.

“I know why you don’t want me to dance, it’s because mom danced and you’re afraid Dad. Why? I just want to dance.” Tara sobbed breaking into tears.

At that moment her Dad left not standing to hear the painful true words. Tara knew she would get there even if it meant disobeying her Dad. She didn’t want to but, whatever it would take to achieve her dreams.

The next morning after Tara’s firm talk with Dad she quietly snuck out of the house stopping in Dad’s room whispering

“This is for you Dad.”

She had been planning this since she had moved. A couple blocks away was the beautiful NJPAC a building that looked like it didn’t belong in the city. It had giant glass doors, marble flooring and theaters filled with talented performers and cheerful audiences. Tara had gotten there a minute after the doors opened. It just so happened that a performer had just got out of dance practice and was heading to the concession stand for water.

“Should I talk to her?” Tara mumbled to quiet for anybody to hear.

Suddenly her brain took over, right foot, left foot, until she made it to the dancer.

“Hi, can I ask you a question?” Tara asked very slowly.

“Sure, what’s up butter cup?” The peppy dancer answered.

“Ok, I’m going to go right out and say this, can you help me learn how to dance and be a performer?” Tara questioned, a little unsure of herself.

“Sure, only if you can stay committed and listen. Also if you turn out to be a good dancer we are actually lookin’ for a new child performer for our next show here at NJPAC.” The dancer answered, while looking over Tara to see what qualities she may have.

“Okay, how much do I need to pay; I don’t have much to offer.” Tara exclaimed still filled with shock.

“None dancing isn’t money it’s you and your passion, we start today, let’s go.”

“Okay.”

The next couple hours of dance class was the roughest Tara had ever been through. Do that, come on show me your passion, was all that came out of the teachers mouth. After Tara was too tired to dance she was assigned dance homework and to go home and rest.

“Where have you been young lady, all your brothers and sisters are looking everywhere for you.” Dad yelled.

“Sorry Dad I guess I lost track of time, I was at a new friends house.” Tara said making up more excuses in her head.

“Fine just this time now sit down and eat dinner.” Dad demanded leaving the room to tell everyone to stop looking for her.

That was a close one Tara thought what do I say tomorrow and the next day, I can’t keep lying to him. That was all that went through her mind when she realized she has no choice but to lie until the big show if she tells the truth Dad would stop her for sure.

A couple months passed of this routine, school, homework, dance, excuses. She couldn’t believe how fast time went by and that her NJPAC performance was only in a week, only one more week of lying to Dad, yay, she thought. When Dad arrived home on her only day of practice off she convinced him to going to the show without explaining that she was in it.

“Sure honey, I think it would be nice to have some family time.”

“Cool Dad.”

The next week of practices was hard. They had to get ready for the big night. When it finally arrived Tara rushed everyone out of the house so they would be on time, they came in took their seats and Tara followed the plan and said “I have to go to the bathroom.” After a few minutes it started.

Music, lights, dancers…. Action. Tara came out with a grand leap high in the air. It took Dad a couple minutes to process this was his daughter and he couldn’t stop her. After this scene ended it was time for the slow and beautiful scene. Tara started by doing her gorgeous turns in second. That was when it hit her dad like a lightning bolt in a horrible storm, my daughter was meant for dancing and I can’t stop her. Tara started to spot his face, her plan worked, she knew Dad understood where she was coming from and she knew they would have a long understanding conversation later.